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Special Thematic Section on "Societal Change"

Increasing Intergroup Cooperation Toward Social Change by Restoring Advantaged and Disadvantaged Groups' Positive Identities

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Abstract

In this article, we develop a perspective on social change as cooperation between advantaged and disadvantaged groups to facilitate not only redistribution of power and wealth but also restoration of threatened identity dimensions. We argue that disadvantaged groups experience threats to their agency whereas advantaged groups experience threats to their morality. Restoration of these aspects of groups' identities can unlock the potential for collective action among members of disadvantaged groups and for a greater willingness to change the status quo toward equality among members of advantaged groups. A major theoretical implication of these findings is that social psychological theorizing should pay greater attention to morally based motivations as critical factors in the facilitation of change. A prime practical implication is that interventions designed to improve intergroup relations should consider not only acceptance-related but also agency-related motivations (e.g., through a "common stigmatizers identity" re-categorization strategy).

Keywords: social change, the needs-based model, agency, morality, identity threat

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One of the basic observations put forward by Social Dominance Theory (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) is that human societies are generally structured as group-based hierarchies in which advantaged and disadvantaged groups compete over resources that are both *material* (e.g., well paying jobs) and *symbolic* (e.g., positive identity) in nature. If so, social change towards equality may be conceptualized as a twofold process comprised of the redistribution of both concrete and symbolic "commodities", or as the broader discourse in the social sciences would have it, redistribution and recognition (Fraser & Honneth, 2003).

In the case of material resources and power, changing the existing societal arrangements towards greater equality is a unidirectional (albeit difficult) process: power and privilege should be taken from the advantaged group(s) and given to the disadvantaged group(s) (e.g., through the implementation of affirmative action policies). As the advantaged and the disadvantaged both wish (to keep or to gain) the same thing, social change would

seem to almost inevitably involve conflict (Coombs, 1987; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The case of symbolic resources, however, is different. Current social psychological literature suggests that groups' identities are multidimensional. Therefore, beyond the motivation to compete for material resources and power, groups have various identity-related needs that, so we argue, can best be satisfied cooperatively. In the present article, we build on the Needs-Based Model (Nadler & Shnabel, 2008; Shnabel & Nadler, 2008) to develop a perspective on social change as cooperation between advantaged and disadvantaged groups. Our perspective suggests that intergroup cooperation in the exchange of symbolic, identity-related resources may ultimately contribute to social change toward greater equality also in terms of redistribution of concrete, material resources.

We begin by presenting the Needs-Based Model in its original formulation, which focused on interpersonal relationships. Next, we present its extension to intergroup relations and review relevant empirical research. Finally, we discuss the potential contribution of the model's insights to the theoretical understanding and practical facilitation of social change.

The Needs-Based Model: Reconciliation Between Individual Victims and Perpetrators

The Needs-Based Model was originally formulated to account for the dynamics between victims and perpetrators following interpersonal transgressions and the way in which using the apology-forgiveness cycle (Tavuchis, 1991) may facilitate their willingness to reconcile with each other. The main tenet of the model is that transgressions damage the psychological resources of both victims and perpetrators. This damage, however, is asymmetrical: victims tend to feel inferior in terms of their level of power (Foster & Rusbult, 1999), honor (Scheff, 1994), self-esteem (Scobie & Scobie, 1998), and perceived control (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994), and they may therefore experience feelings of victimization or anger (McCullough et al., 1998). In contrast, perpetrators tend to suffer from a sense of moral inferiority (Exline & Baumeister, 2000; Zechmeister & Romero, 2002) and may experience guilt (Baumeister et al., 1994), shame (Exline & Baumeister, 2000), or remorse (North, 1998). This array of emotional states has been said to reflect perpetrators' "anxiety over social exclusion" (Baumeister et al., 1994, p. 246) because people who are viewed as guilty by others face the threat of being rejected from the moral community to which they belong (Tavuchis, 1991).

Deprivation of psychological resources corresponds to a motivational state in which people experience their deficit as a need that must be fulfilled. For victims, there is an enhanced need to restore their sense of power and agency (i.e., the ability to determine their own outcomes; Choshen-Hillel & Yaniv, 2011), which increases power-seeking behavior (Foster & Rusbult, 1999). To achieve this goal, victims are likely to want perpetrators to acknowledge responsibility for the injustice they have caused. Perpetrators, on their part, often try to excuse, justify or otherwise refuse to admit responsibility for their offensive behavior (Schönbach, 1990). However, to the extent that they do acknowledge their responsibility, this acknowledgement creates a kind of debt that only the victim can cancel, and it returns a sense of control to the victim, who may then determine whether the perpetrator will be forgiven and reaccepted into the moral community (Akhtar, 2002; Minow, 1998; Schönbach, 1990). For this reason, victims often try to induce perpetrators to feel guilty, with perpetrators' guilt serving as an admission of the debt owed to victims, thus allowing even a relatively weak individual "to get his or her way" (Baumeister et al., 1994, p. 247) in the relationship.

The perpetrators, compared with the victims, exercise more power and control during the transgression. Nevertheless, when perpetrators are accused of violating conventional moral standards or deviating from group norms, they may fear exclusion from the moral community to which they belong. The concept of *moral community* was coined by [Tavuchis \(1991\)](#) in his analysis of the power of apologies to amend broken relationships. The community includes psychologically relevant others who share a particular set of norms and values with them. Membership in this moral community is “predicated upon our knowledge, acceptance and conformity to specific and general norms” ([Tavuchis, 1991](#), p. 8). Most, if not all, moral communities hold that one should not harm another person or group of people unjustifiably, unnecessarily, or disproportionately ([Haidt, 2007](#)). Consequently, the perception that the perpetrators have inflicted such harm may threaten their membership in the relevant moral community and elicit fears of exclusion ([Tavuchis, 1991](#)). Anxiety over social exclusion increases perpetrators’ motivation to perceive themselves as acceptable people ([Baumeister, Stillwell, & Wotman, 1990](#)), as well as their need to have others express empathy for their emotional distress ([McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997](#)) and understanding of the circumstances that compelled them to act in a socially unacceptable way ([Benziman, 2009](#)). This understanding, in turn, restores perpetrators’ moral image (i.e., their sense of being perceived as moral social actors) and helps them feel re-accepted or “re-humanized” ([Shnabel, Nadler, Canetti-Nisim, & Ullrich, 2008](#)). Empathy and understanding of the perpetrator’s perspective can therefore be conceptualized as “gifts” that victims can offer to those who have offended them, which culminates in the victims explicitly granting forgiveness ([Enright, Freedman, & Rique, 1998](#)).

From this perspective, the use of the apology-forgiveness cycle can be conceptualized as an act of social exchange in which the symbolic commodities of “empowerment” and “acceptance” are traded. When a successful exchange between victims and perpetrators takes place, both sides satisfy their emotional needs and cease to feel weaker than, or morally inferior to, their counterpart. This generates a process of symbolic erasure of the roles of victim and perpetrator, which places the involved parties on a more equal footing ([North, 1998](#)) and thus leads to increased willingness to reconcile with one’s opponent ([Nadler & Shnabel, 2008](#)).

From Interpersonal to Intergroup Injustice: Applying the Needs-Based Model to Contexts of Intergroup Relations

To make the Needs-Based Model more parsimonious and applicable to a variety of contexts, it was further proposed that empowerment and acceptance meet basic needs that can be manifested in different ways beyond the explicit expressions of apology and forgiveness ([Shnabel & Nadler, 2010](#)), and that individuals can experience these needs not only in interpersonal relationships but also as members of groups ([Shnabel, Nadler, Ullrich, Dovidio, & Carmi, 2009](#)). For example, perpetrators may empower their victims by acknowledging the victims’ achievements and capabilities (competence is often treated as a form of empowerment; e.g., [Brookings & Bolton, 2000](#); [Menon & Hartmann, 2002](#)) or, in the case of intergroup conflicts, by expressing feelings of respect for the victimized group’s culture and values. Similarly, social acceptance of perpetrators may be expressed by willingness to form friendships with them, work with them, or, in the case of intergroup conflict, to cooperate with them on joint projects of an economic or cultural nature. For example, whereas during the 1950s and 1960s many Israelis were unwilling to visit Germany or buy German products, their current willingness to do so may reflect their enhanced acceptance of Germany and Germans as part of the moral community of nations.

These hypotheses have received empirical support in a series of experiments. For example, in one study (Shnabel et al., 2009, Study 2) Jewish and German participants, representing the victim and perpetrator groups respectively, were exposed to two types of speeches allegedly made by their outgroup's representative at the opening ceremony of the Holocaust memorial in Berlin. One speech conveyed social acceptance:

We, the [participants' outgroup], should accept the [participants' ingroup] and remember that we are all human beings. We should understand that it is not easy for the [participants' ingroup] to live with the past and that the [participants' ingroup] had suffered great pain under the Nazi-regime.

The other speech conveyed social empowerment:

We, the [participants' outgroup], should cherish the contribution of the [participants' ingroup] to humanity and Western culture in many fields of life. We should remember that nowadays, it is the [participants' ingroup's] right to be strong and proud in their country and have the power to determine their own fate.

Consistent with the logic of the Needs-Based Model we found that German participants had a greater willingness to reconcile with Jews (i.e., had a more positive view of the outgroup, showed greater readiness to act to promote reconciliation with it, felt more optimistic about future relations between the two groups, etc.) following the acceptance compared to the empowerment message. By contrast, Jewish participants exhibited greater willingness to reconcile with Germans following the empowerment compared to the acceptance message.

After establishing the model's validity in contexts of intergroup transgressions involving direct violence we aimed to explore whether its insights into the psychological needs associated with victim and perpetrator roles could be applied to the relations between advantaged and disadvantaged groups (respectively) in contexts characterized by group disparity (also termed "structural violence"; Galtung, 1969). We suggest that the psychological dynamics between advantaged and disadvantaged groups would correspond to those between perpetrators and victims when two conditions are met.

First, these groups must view themselves as belonging to the same "moral community", hence committed to a shared set of moral standards, values and norms (Janoff-Bulman & Werther, 2008). This condition is particularly critical for the advantaged group: we expect advantaged-group members to be concerned about their moral approval and acceptance by the disadvantaged group only when the latter is viewed as entitled for the same moral rights as the advantaged group, that is, when disadvantaged-group members are perceived as deserving equal rights and treatment. Recent theorizing by Moscovici and Pérez (2009) suggests that this condition is generally met in the modern, liberal, Western societies that are the focus of the present article. Specifically, Moscovici and Pérez (2009) argue that the events of the Second World War, which gave rise to the new concept of "crimes against humanity", as well as the "big explosion" of movements for human rights (e.g., the civil right movement) have dramatically changed the societal perceptions regarding the existence of an *ethical relationship* between advantaged and disadvantaged groups. In particular, in the last 20 years the representation of disadvantaged groups has gradually changed from deviants (who are potentially excluded from the moral community) to victims, who deserve the protection of the human rights. Moreover, "[b]y recognizing the victim, we recognize and designate the guilty: Women point to men, Indians to Spanish, Blacks to the Whites, the colonized to the colonizers" (p. 86). This analysis suggests that advantaged and disadvantaged groups indeed represent themselves as members of a shared moral community who hold ethical responsibilities towards each other.

The second condition required for correspondence between victim-perpetrator relations on one hand and disadvantaged-advantaged intergroup relations on the other is that group disparity must be perceived as unjust, that is, as violating the fundamental moral principle of fairness (Haidt, 2007). The answer as to whether or not this condition is met in modern, liberal societies is somewhat tricky. On one hand, these societies are generally committed to egalitarian values; for example, the vast majority of White U.S. Americans indicates support for social and political equality and believes that prejudice and discrimination are wrong (Bobo, 2001). At the same time, however, the existence of group-based inequality is often denied (e.g., Shenhav, 2006), minimized (e.g., Leach, Snider, & Iyer, 2002) or justified by attributing it to different traits or ambition among advantaged and disadvantaged groups (e.g., Glick & Fiske, 2001). This complexity implies, in our view, that in modern, liberal Western societies there is a *potential* for psychological correspondence between the needs of victims and perpetrators to those of disadvantaged and advantaged groups. This potential, however, is not always fulfilled.

In the next section we turn to review evidence supporting the tenet that under certain conditions (i.e., when the injustice of the existing status relations becomes salient), divergent threats and consequent needs would emerge among disadvantaged and advantaged groups. Further, we present research demonstrating how, on one hand, when disadvantaged and advantaged groups' needs remain unsatisfied they might block the path to social change, but also how, on the other hand, addressing these groups' needs can pave the way towards such change.

Divergent Threats

Our claim that disadvantaged and advantaged groups may experience threats to different dimensions of their identities is based primarily on the logic of the Stereotype Content Model (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002). Whereas earlier theories conceptualized outgroup prejudice as mere antipathy (e.g., Allport, 1954), a major novel contribution of the Stereotype Content Model is the insight that most outgroups elicit ambivalent responses. Specifically, disadvantaged groups (e.g., the elderly) are often subjected to paternalistic stereotypes, which depict them as high on the warmth dimension (which has later been termed also as "the moral-social dimension"; Fiske, Cuddy, & Glick, 2007) but low on the competence dimension. Such groups are pitied, which means that they are liked but not respected. By contrast, advantaged groups (e.g., the rich) are often subjected to envious stereotypes, which depict them as high on the competence dimension but low on the warmth dimension, deserving respect but not liking.

While there is a strong similarity between the Needs-Based Model's constructs of sense of power and moral image on one hand and the Stereotype Content Model's constructs of competence and warmth on the other, it is important to note that these two pairs of constructs are not exactly the same. For example, as part of their research on agentic women, Rudman and Glick (2001) distinguished between competence and dominance, the latter referring to advancing one's interests at the expense of others which may be therefore viewed as closer to the concept of power. Similarly, Leach, Ellemers, and Barreto (2007a) showed that sociability (which is closer to the concept of warmth) and morality constitute separate dimensions of groups' identities. Finally, Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) identifies three fundamental human needs: relatedness (feeling connected to others), competence (feeling capable of achieving one's goals), and autonomy (feeling that one's decisions and actions emanate from one's authentic self and are not the result of external influence or coercion; this last concept may be viewed as closer to power).

While we acknowledge the differences between these various constructs, we nevertheless suggest that competence, autonomy, and power, on one hand, and warmth, sociability, and moral image, on the other, can be subsumed

under the same two broad, multifaceted categories, namely the “Big-Two” dimensions (Abele, Cuddy, Judd, & Yzerbyt, 2008). We suggest that despite the differences between the components comprising each dimension, they do generally show a certain degree of similarity and even fungibility. For example, although victims are generally motivated to restore their competence and agency (i.e., sense of control over their own outcomes) they do sometimes reveal also an enhanced need for dominance (e.g., when trying to take revenge on perpetrators). And, although perpetrators are generally motivated to restore their positive moral image, they do respond positively (e.g., show increased willingness to reconcile) to reassurance of their warmth, because it implies that they are basically “good people” (Shnabel, Ullrich, Nadler, Dovidio, & Aydin, 2013).

We further argue that different components within the Big-Two dimensions may become more salient as a function of the specific context (SimanTov-Nachlieli, Shnabel, & Nadler, 2013; see also Leach, Minescu, Poppe, & Hagedoorn, 2008). In particular, in contexts of direct violence (e.g., an open conflict) groups may experience threats mainly to their sense of agency and moral image, whereas in contexts of structural group disparity they may be primarily concerned about their stereotypical portrayal as incompetent or cold. Consistent with this possibility, in a series of experiments that examined interpersonal interactions between members of U.S. American disadvantaged and advantaged groups, Bergsieker, Shelton, and Richeson (2010) revealed that when interacting with Whites, Blacks and Latinos/as were primarily concerned about defying their stereotypical portrayal as unintelligent and incompetent. Whites, by contrast, when interacting with members of these minority groups, were primarily concerned about defying their stereotypical portrayal as racist and bigoted. Put differently, in interracial/interethnic interactions Blacks and Latinos/as wanted to be respected whereas Whites wanted to be liked by the outgroup (as being liked by members of the disadvantaged groups implies moral approval; Bergsieker et al., 2010).

Divergent Motivations

Two lines of research suggest that the divergent threats posed to advantaged and disadvantaged groups lead their members to experience different motivational states. First, Siem, von Oettingen, Mummendey, and Nadler (2013) found that advantaged-group members expressed a stronger need for social acceptance relative to disadvantaged-group members, who in turn had a stronger need for empowerment. For example, when clinical psychologists compared themselves to social workers (who are disadvantaged relative to their ingroup), they expressed a greater desire to be liked by their outgroup and be viewed as fair and friendly than when comparing themselves to physicians (a relatively advantaged group). By contrast, when comparing their group to physicians, clinical psychologists expressed a greater need for voice and influence than when comparing themselves to social workers (Siem et al., 2013, Study 2). Importantly, these findings were obtained only when the unequal status relations were perceived as illegitimate; that is, when the clinical psychologists learned that their ingroup and the outgroup (social workers or physicians, depending on experimental condition) bear comparable levels of responsibility, have an equally comprehensive education, and spend a similar amount of time on direct contact with patients, hence “the existing status differences lack any reasonable basis” (p. 143). Divergent motivations did not emerge when status relations were perceived as legitimate (i.e., when participants were exposed to information that justified the existing differences between the different professional groups).

Research conducted by Saguy, Dovidio, and Pratto (2008) may also be viewed as supporting our argument. Using both experimentally induced and natural groups, Saguy et al. (2008) found that in a situation of intergroup contact advantaged-group members preferred to talk about the commonalities between groups whereas disadvantaged-group members preferred to talk about power. For example, in one study (Study 2) Mizrahi and Ashkenazi Jews (disadvantaged and advantaged groups in Israeli society; Smootha, 2003)ⁱ were asked to recommend topics for

discussion in planned intergroup “discussion encounters”. Compared to Ashkenazi Jews, Mizrahi Jews indicated a greater desire to discuss topics such as affirmative action and other ways to promote equal distribution of state resources. Ashkenazi Jews, in turn, showed a greater desire to discuss topics such as commonalities between the groups (e.g., cultural similarities) than power-related topics.

Consistent with our main argument, [Saguy et al. \(2008\)](#) interpreted the disadvantaged groups’ preferences as reflecting their need for empowerment. However, advantaged groups’ preferences were interpreted as a strategic attempt to obscure and draw attention away from group-based power inequality. Supporting this interpretation, the motivation to discuss power-related topics was mediated by group members’ desire for social change towards equality. For example, Mizrahi Jews’ greater motivation to talk about power was mediated by their increased wish to change the status quo whereas Ashkenazi Jews’ reduced motivation to talk about power was mediated by their greater wish to maintain the status quo (Study 2). Without denying the latter motivation, we propose that it is possible that Ashkenazi Jews’ preferences could have been *additionally* driven by their greater need for acceptance in light of their fear of being accused of being unjust or arrogant (a common stereotype about their group): talking about power might intensify this threat whereas talking about commonalities might attenuate it.

Admittedly, even if [Saguy et al. \(2008\)](#) had measured and found evidence of the advantaged groups’ heightened need for acceptance, this need might reflect the advantaged groups’ wish to evoke a sense of superficial social harmony (see [Saguy, Tausch, Dovidio, & Pratto, 2009](#)), which in turn may encourage disadvantaged-group members’ acceptance of the status quo and reduce the risk of uproar. Still, we argue that advantaged groups’ wish to talk about commonalities may reflect their genuine motivation for moral-social acceptance that is not necessarily in the service of their wish to maintain their power and privilege. Consistent with our claim that advantaged groups may experience dual motivations (i.e., to maintain the status quo and to gain moral-social acceptance), Saguy and colleagues found that when group inequality was presented as illegitimate, Ashkenazi Jews showed greater willingness to talk about power: if their preferences were driven solely by strategic considerations one would expect their desire to avoid power talk to be more pronounced in the illegitimate condition (because talking about power puts their privilege at greater risk when status relations are not secure). The fact that the opposite pattern was obtained points to the possibility that moral considerations came into play once the legitimacy of status quo was undermined.

We have discussed the research by [Saguy et al. \(2008\)](#) at some length to illustrate an interesting implication of our analysis: when the status quo is perceived as insecure (i.e., illegitimate and unstable), members of high status groups may not only perceive a threat to their group’s power superiority as assumed by Social Identity Theory ([Tajfel & Turner, 1979](#)), but also a threat to their group’s warmth and morality. Future research may explore whether these dual motivations are simultaneously experienced by individual group members, or experienced at different levels of intensity by different subgroups within an advantaged group. We further discuss the implications of the duality in advantaged groups’ motivations in the next section.

Unsatisfied Needs as Barriers to Social Change

The accumulating evidence reviewed in the previous section leads to the conclusion that disadvantaged groups are motivated to restore their dimension of identity related to agency, competence, and power, whereas advantaged groups are primarily motivated to restore the dimension of identity related to morality, warmth, and sociability. As pointed out by [Bergsieker et al. \(2010\)](#), the incongruity in advantaged and disadvantaged-group members’ motivations might have negative implications for intergroup communication. For example, the pursuit of incompatible

impression management goals in intergroup interactions—namely, the intensified efforts of advantaged-group members to be liked (e.g., through increased smiling and laughing; [Mendes & Koslov, 2013](#)) and of disadvantaged-group members to be respected—can lead to cognitive depletion that in turn hinders effective cooperation.

Moreover, anecdotal evidence suggests that such miscommunication may be also evident among representatives (e.g., leaders) of these groups who meet at summits convened to improve intergroup relations at times of intensified conflict. These representatives' divergent goals may lead to their deep disappointment with the results of such summits. Reverend Al Sharpton's comments following his meeting with New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg illustrate this point. After the police shot an unarmed Black man 50 times in Queens, Bloomberg convened a meeting of black religious leaders and elected officials at City Hall, calling the circumstances "inexplicable" and "unacceptable". As he left the City Hall, Reverend Sharpton announced, "We prefer talking than not talking, but the object is not a conversation. The object is fairness and justice. Because we're not just interested in being treated politely, we're interested in being treated fairly and rightly" ([Cardwell & Chan, 2006](#)). We speculate that Sharpton meant to convey the idea that although Bloomberg's organization of the meeting might have been well-intentioned, it was nevertheless insufficient to fully satisfy the needs of the Black community for respect and justice. In particular, agreeing on a joint statement that condemns racism and racially-based violence may be psychologically meaningful for the advantaged group, as it addresses its members' need for moral validation and "re-humanization". This is not the case, however, for the disadvantaged group who may view such statements as "cheap talk" unless they serve as a platform for a real change in power relations.

Another illustration of such disappointment, this time on the part of the advantaged group's representative, can be found in a famous quote attributed to former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir. On April 13, 1971, Meir met with the leaders of the Black Panthers (HaPanterim Hashchorim), a protest movement established by Mizrahi Jews who, inspired by the fight of African-Americans, struggled for equality between Mizrahi and Ashkenazi Jews. The protocol of this meeting was not preserved, but we take the liberty of speculating that Meir's agenda was probably to highlight the commonalities between Jews of different descents and foster intergroup harmony through being nice to each other, whereas the protestors' agenda was probably aimed at addressing injustice and redistribution of resources (i.e., "power talk" in terms of [Saguy et al., 2008](#)). This miscommunication, namely the protestors' failure to address Meir's wish for a friendly meeting (behavior which stands in striking contrast to the paternalistic view of Mizrahi Jews as warm and incompetent) probably frustrated Meir who allegedly summarized the meeting by saying, "I met with the Panthers and they are not nice people". This utterance, which became a symbol in the collective Israeli memory of the deep divide between Meir and the protestors, may be viewed as unusual in the political arena, as it is uncommon to relate to one's political opponents' "niceness". Yet, apparently this is the dimension that was prompted in Meir due to her needs and expectations as an advantaged-group member.

Beyond the general negative consequences of groups' incongruity of goals (e.g., cognitive load or disappointment from intergroup interactions), advantaged-group members' need to protect their ingroup's morality can ironically reduce their support of social change. Recent research on groups' engagement in competitive victimhood lends weight to this argument. The term "competitive victimhood" was originally coined by [Noor, Brown, Gonzalez, Manzi, and Lewis \(2008\)](#) to denote the efforts of groups involved in a protracted violent conflict (e.g., Protestants and Catholics in North Ireland) to establish that their ingroup has been subjected to greater suffering at the hands of the outgroup than the other way around and is hence entitled to the crown of the "true victim" of the conflict (see also [Noor, Brown, & Prentice, 2008](#); [Noor, Shnabel, Halabi, & Nadler, 2012](#)). [Sullivan, Landau, Branscombe,](#)

and Rothschild (2012) extended this concept to the context of structural inequality and showed in a series of experiments that group members exhibited greater engagement in competitive victimhood in the face of accusations that their group unjustly discriminates against an outgroup. For example, male participants exposed to an article that blamed men for being responsible for gender inequality (compared to an exonerating article) expressed greater belief that men experience more discrimination than women (Sullivan et al., 2012, Study 1). These findings are consistent with previous research showing that even members of structurally advantaged groups often struggle for their share of victimhood (e.g., claims of material deprivation among non-Aborigines in Australia [Leach, Iyer, & Pedersen, 2007b], or claims among White U.S. college students that affirmative action policies are in fact a form of reverse discrimination [Thomsen et al., 2010]).

Importantly, and in line with our argument regarding advantaged groups' primary motivation, Sullivan et al. (2012, Study 4) found that the engagement in competitive victimhood was mediated by the experience of "stigma reversal" (Killian, 1985)—the advantaged-group members' belief that they are viewed as guilt-worthy and immoral because they belong to a group who is held responsible for the oppression of disadvantaged groups. Moreover, in line with our reasoning, advantaged-group members' engagement in competitive victimhood was independent of status concerns (e.g., the desire to maintain power and dominance) or perceived material benefits to be gained from making claims of victimization (e.g., entitlement for financial compensation). Unfortunately, Sullivan and colleagues did not examine the influence of competitive victimhood on support for social change towards equality. Yet, in light of the findings that in contexts of open conflicts competitive victimhood is generally associated with greater hostility and reduced generosity (e.g., less willingness to forgive the outgroup; Shnabel, Halabi, & Noor, 2013), it is reasonable to assume that it should lead to decreased support for change. Hence, whereas the lay expectation is that advantaged-group members should respond to accusations of discrimination by supporting social change (as a straightforward means of amending their moral image), their need to protect and restore their moral image counter-intuitively may serve as a barrier to such change.

In addition, indirect support for our argument that advantaged-group members' need to defend their ingroup's moral image hinders their support of social change comes from studies that have used self-affirmation manipulations. These manipulations, typically delivered through exercises in which participants are asked to write about their most important values, have been found to bolster the perceived integrity of the self, namely "one's sense of adaptive and moral adequacy" (Steele, 1988, p. 263; see also Sherman & Cohen, 2006). It is therefore reasonable to assume that affirmed advantaged-group members whose identity as good, acceptable people has been reassured should be less concerned about protecting their ingroup's moral image. Consistent with this logic, white U.S. Americans were found to be more willing to admit white privilege following a self-affirmation exercise, culminating in their greater support for redistributive social policies such as affirmative action (Lowery et al., 2007; see also Adams, Tormala, & O'Brien, 2006). By contrast, when Whites were motivated to protect their moral image (i.e., in the no-affirmation conditions), they defensively denied the existence of white privilege (Adams et al., 2006; Lowery et al., 2007).

To summarize this section, we presented evidence supporting our argument that when status relations are perceived as illegitimate, advantaged and disadvantaged groups have divergent motivations, which serve as barriers to intergroup harmony and effective communication. In particular, advantaged-group members' experience of the need to protect their ingroup's moral image paradoxically blocks their readiness to admit their privilege and, consequently, reduces their openness to social change. Therefore, in line with Shapiro and Neuberg's (2007) call to broaden the conceptualization of stereotype threat beyond academic task performance (e.g., studying groups for which

stereotypes are not academically centered), we suggest that the threat of stigma reversal can be conceptualized as a form of stereotype threat for members of advantaged groups.

In the next section we examine one consequence of groups' experience of divergent motivations; namely, their divergent responses to messages from the outgroup.

Groups' Satisfied Needs as Catalysts for Social Change

A main tenet of the Needs-Based Model is that the apology-forgiveness cycle effectively promotes reconciliation because it addresses victims' and perpetrators' psychological needs. Applied to the context of structural inequality, we theorized that reconciliation should be facilitated by a reciprocal exchange of messages through which advantaged-group members express respect and acknowledgment of the disadvantaged group's competence whereas the disadvantaged group expresses liking or moral acceptance of the advantaged group (Shnabel, Ullrich, et al., 2013). We additionally theorized, however, that when the concept of reconciliation is translated into contexts of structural inequality, its meaning needs to be extended. Whereas in contexts of direct violence reconciliation denotes "a changed psychological orientation toward the other" (Staub, Pearlman, Gubin, & Hagengimana, 2005, p. 301), in contexts of intergroup inequality it should also imply readiness for a structural change toward equality. Our broader definition of reconciliation is consistent with current theorizing in peace psychology that argues that beyond the cessation of violence the term peace should also refer to the promotion of social arrangements that reduce social, racial, gender, and economic injustices (Christie, Tint, Wagner, & Winter, 2008).

We examined our hypotheses in the context of the relations between advantaged and disadvantaged universities, using both natural and experimentally induced groups. For example, in one study (Shnabel, Ullrich, et al., 2013; Study 2) German psychology students learned that due to the "Bologna Process" (an EU initiative to introduce comparable university degrees across Europe) their university was ostensibly either advantaged or disadvantaged compared to another university in terms of access to extremely limited spots in a Master's program. They then read two speeches allegedly delivered by representatives of the other university at a conference on the future of the Master's degree in Germany: one speech reinforced the ingroup's competence (e.g., applauded their high academic qualifications), whereas the other speech reinforced the ingroup's warmth (e.g., conveyed that they were nice, likeable people). In line with our hypotheses, the advantaged-group members showed more positive outgroup attitudes and greater willingness to act for social change (e.g., sign a petition to change the admission policies to graduate programs) following the warmth reassuring message compared to the competence reassuring message. The opposite pattern was obtained among disadvantaged-group members.

We believe that these findings have several implications for understanding the intergroup dynamics that may contribute to social change toward equality. First, the finding that reassuring the disadvantaged group's competence increased its members' willingness to act to achieve equality is important in light of research on system justification, which has found that disadvantaged groups sometimes rationalize their status position and support the system that exploits them (Jost & Hunyady, 2005). The affirmation by the advantaged group of the disadvantaged group's identity dimension that stereotypes deny (i.e., competence) may be an effective way to overcome disadvantaged-group members' passive acceptance of the status quo because it implies that their lower status stems from unfair social arrangements rather than from inferior ability. Moreover, conveying to disadvantaged-group members that they possess the competence-related traits (e.g., skill, aptitude, and ambition) which are necessary to achieve the change they seek may also restore their impaired sense of collective efficacy (Mummendey, Kessler, Klink,

& Mielke, 1999) which often prevents them from acting for change even when they are dissatisfied with the status quo.

Second, the finding that reassuring the advantaged group's warmth promoted not only positive intergroup attitudes but also a greater willingness to act for change is of particular importance in light of previous research revealing that these two outcomes are often dissociated from each other (Dixon, Durrheim, & Tredoux, 2005; Saguy et al., 2009). Specifically, that research showed that advantaged groups' positive attitudes towards disadvantaged groups often do not translate into willingness to change the status quo towards equality because such change requires giving up power and privilege. Unlike the pessimistic conclusions of that research, our findings optimistically reveal that under certain circumstances advantaged groups are willing to sacrifice some of their advantages to restore their positive group image (see also Lowery, Chow, Knowles, & Unzueta, 2012). They suggest that reassurance of warmth may be an effective strategy through which members of disadvantaged groups can encourage advantaged-group members to behave in a way that is consistent with their restored moral identity and cooperate towards social change. Such constructive cooperation may be viewed as analogous to the positive responses of perpetrators to expressions of forgiveness by their victims (see Leunissen, De Cremer, & Reinders Folmer, 2012).

Although the above findings support our hypotheses regarding the potential benefits of mutual exchange of empowering and accepting messages between advantaged and disadvantaged groups, it is unclear whether these could be generalized to other contexts beyond the relations between two academic institutions. With regard to the disadvantaged group, a series of experiments conducted by Cohen, Steele, and Ross (1999) may be interpreted as providing indirect support for our assumptions, which have not been directly examined so far. In their experiments, Black and White U.S. American students received a detailed, critical feedback from a White mentor on an essay they had written. Compared to White students, Black students viewed the feedback as biased and, as a result, showed reduced motivation and identification with writing—a behavior that may be conceptualized as defensive and self-debilitating because openness to criticism is critical for academic success. However, when the negative feedback additionally communicated high standards for performance and assurance that the student was capable of meeting them, it reduced Black participants' perceived bias and increased their motivation and identification with writing even beyond the level found among Whites. Thus, consistent with our general rationale, the reassurance of their competence and capacity by an advantaged group member encouraged members of a disadvantaged group to respond in a way that had the potential to challenge and ultimately defy rather than perpetuate the negative stereotype about their group's abilities.

Admittedly, Cohen and colleagues (1999) did not examine Black participants' readiness to engage in collective action for social change; rather, the outcome examined in their study (i.e., academic motivation and identification) may reflect Black participants' potential for individual (rather than group-based) mobility. Nevertheless, in light of the theorizing that social hierarchy is maintained to a great extent by the self-debilitating behavior of disadvantaged-group members (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), we believe that in this case "the personal is political" (Hanisch, 1969). That is, the aggregated reduction in self-debilitating behavior among individual members of disadvantaged groups can substantially hinder the perpetuation of the existing social hierarchy (parallel to the way in which aggregated individual discrimination can reinforce it; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Of course, future research should examine our hypotheses regarding the effects of competence reassurance on disadvantaged groups more directly.

With regard to advantaged groups, results by Dittmann, Purdie-Vaughns, and Dovidio (2013) provide direct support for our hypothesis regarding the positive effects of moral-social acceptance. In one study, Black U.S. Americans

were exposed to a documentary film about slavery in the U.S. Watching this movie motivated Black participants to challenge Whites' presumed lack of awareness of the effect of slavery on contemporary racial relations. Participants were then instructed to write a letter about "the implications of slavery for intergroup relations today" to an ostensible White fellow university student who allegedly had watched the same documentary. When the researchers analyzed the content of these letters they found that Blacks who were strongly motivated to act as agents of social change (i.e., who were high in "implicit power"; [Winter, 1991](#)) developed unique framing strategies intended to influence Whites. Specifically, these Black "social agents" wrote letters that emphasized continued racial injustice and the need for change combined with expressions of moral-social acceptance and interest in affiliation and unity with the Whites. A sample excerpt from one letter illustrates this unique framing strategy:

Black people and White people have made many strides towards equality in this country throughout history but we all still have many miles to go before we sleep [...] I implore you, my White friend, to always remember what went on in this country and be conscious of that when dealing with Black people today.

In this excerpt, the Black participant highlighted the need to keep striving for racial equality, yet s/he did so while expressing moral-social acceptance of the Whites through calling them "friends" and praising their contribution to steps made in this direction so far. By contrast, the letters of Black participants with relatively little drive to act as agents of social change (i.e., with low implicit power motive) primarily condemned Whites for past and present racial injustices. A subsequent study that focused on White participants revealed that when injustice was made salient (i.e., in the exposure-to-slavery but not in the control condition), their receptiveness to the arguments expressed in the letters increased when these included expressions of acceptance. Specifically, in line with our general reasoning, White participants who watched the documentary about slavery liked the letters that indicated moral-social acceptance more than letters that did not include acceptance, and showed reduced anxiety and greater motivation to engage in African-American history in response to them.

Taken together, [Ditlmann et al.'s \(2013\)](#) series of studies suggests that Blacks who wish to engage Whites in the struggle for social change can overcome their defensiveness and make them more receptive to the African-American perspective by using the appropriate type of message framing. Such framing is consistent with one of the principles of Dr. Martin Luther King's philosophy of nonviolence according to which one should "[a]ttack forces of evil, not persons doing evil" in the sense of opposing "the conditions, policies and practices [that perpetuate the oppression] rather than reacting to one's opponents or their personalities" ([The King Center, n.d.](#)).

We argue that distinguishing between an unjust social system and the people belonging to the group who gains privilege from it is an important prerequisite for engaging advantaged-group members in cooperative efforts toward social change. Conversely, stigmatizing individuals as immoral solely based on their group affiliation is likely to bring about a defensive response among advantaged-group members. Arguably, a large body of research suggests that the perception and acknowledgment of social inequity is critical to elicit advantaged-group members' support for policies designed to reduce it (e.g., [Iyer, Leach, & Crosby, 2003](#); [Murrell, Dietz-Uhler, Dovidio, Gaertner, & Drout, 1994](#)). Nevertheless, the route for such acknowledgment and consequent support seems to require, perhaps counter-intuitively, moral acceptance rather than condemnation of the advantaged group. Using this strategy, disadvantaged groups can fulfill their "great humanistic and historical task", which is according to Paulo [Freire \(1970, p. 44\)](#) "to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well".

To summarize this section, we suggest that like the transformative effects of the apology-forgiveness cycle, the exchange of empowering and accepting messages between advantaged and disadvantaged groups can promote

their cooperation toward social change. Such exchanges can simultaneously encourage the collective efforts of disadvantaged groups to promote their own cause as well as advantaged groups' readiness to exhibit "solidarity-based collective action" (Becker, 2012). Admittedly, one of the obstacles inherent to any social exchange, whether these involve concrete or symbolic resources, is its riskiness (Poundstone, 1992; see also Leunissen et al., 2012): if disadvantaged-group members express acceptance and reassurance concerning the advantaged group's morality, how do they know that the advantaged group will not use this reassurance as a moral "credential" or "license" (Monin & Miller, 2001; Sachdeva, Iliev, & Medin, 2009; Zhong, Liljenquist, & Cain, 2009) and consequently avoid accepting its responsibility to redistribute power more equally? Similarly, if advantaged groups express respect towards disadvantaged groups and acknowledgment of the injustice caused by existing social arrangements, how do they know that the disadvantaged group will not use this acknowledgment as a basis for further moral condemnation of the advantaged group? Indeed, when gestures of good-will fail to elicit the expected positive response from the recipient outgroup, this can lead to frustration and anger (Harth, Hornsey, & Barlow, 2011), which might quell rather than instigate intergroup cooperation towards change.

It should be noted, thus, that we do not propose the exchange of empowering and accepting messages to be a panacea that instantaneously heals the relations between advantaged and disadvantaged groups. Rather, in line with the Wohl, Hornsey, and Philpot (2011) "staircase model", we suggest that such an exchange, which may be institutionalized through group leaders' public speeches or official group encounters similar to the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions, to be the first (rather than last) necessary step towards constructive intergroup dialogue. The initiation of such constructive dialogue may ultimately bring about greater equality in terms of both concrete or symbolic resources.

Implications: Two Basic Needs Should be Considered in Theory and Practice

In the following sections we discuss the implications of our claim that groups have two fundamental needs—namely, the need for agency, respect, and status and the need for belongingness and positive moral image—for theories that account for social change towards equality as well as for interventions designed to improve intergroup relations. In the section presenting the implications of our perspective for social psychological theorizing we focus on advantaged-group members' moral-social needs, which have been relatively neglected. Conversely, in the section presenting the implications for practical interventions we focus on disadvantaged-group members' power-related needs, which we believe to have been relatively overlooked in existing interventions.

Theoretical Implications

In a critical attack on some of the prominent social psychological theories, Reicher (2004) argued that these theories do not properly account for the possibility of social change. Consistent with Reicher's claim, we suggest that many social psychological theories intended to provide a general framework for understanding intergroup relations, including Social Dominance Theory (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), Group Position Theory (Blumer, 1958), and Realistic Group Conflict Theory (LeVine & Campbell, 1972), have stressed groups' competition over status, dominance, power, and control over valued resources, but relatively neglected groups' need for morality and acceptance. This relative neglect, we argue, is partially responsible for these theories' failure to satisfactorily account for social change.

Even where previous theorizing has acknowledged groups' need for positive moral image and acceptance, it is often viewed as subjected to (i.e., being in the service of) the need for power and dominance rather than reflecting an authentic motivation. To illustrate, according to Social Dominance Theory, group-based hierarchies are maintained not only through direct coercion but also through "legitimizing myths" that justify social inequality (see also System Justification Theory; [Jost & Hunyady, 2005](#)). This suggests that advantaged groups are motivated to perceive their privilege as just because such justification serves to reinforce and further establish the status quo. However, why should advantaged groups make up these myths to begin with? Why can't they enjoy their privileges without being bothered about whether or not it has been fairly earned? Put differently, there would be no need for legitimizing myths if advantaged groups could simply accept the belief that they seized the advantage just because their ingroup's strength made it possible.

We argue that the emergence of legitimizing myths implies that advantaged groups do have a need for acceptance and positive moral image. Indeed, because people's moral judgments, similar to judgments in other domains ([Kunda, 1990](#)), often reflect motivated reasoning processes ([Haidt, 2001](#)), advantaged groups' perception of the status quo as just and moral is heavily influenced by their motivation to maintain it. But the fact that advantaged-group members' judgments of what is right and just are distorted and biased by their power-related motivations does not negate the existence of a genuine need for morality and justice, whose evolutionary roots have been argued to exist even among non-human primates ([de Waal, 2006](#)). In line with this argument, [Leach et al. \(2007a\)](#) showed in a series of studies that morality was perceived by group members as the most important dimension of their ingroup's identity—one that was most important to their pride in their ingroup and psychological closeness to it. Based on these results [Leach et al.](#) concluded that "[a]s Aristotle and most metaphysicists argued, morality is the most important virtue [...] Recognizing the importance of morality to in-group membership may be an important first step toward understanding its importance in intergroup relations" (p. 248). Consistent with this conclusion, we argue that advantaged-group members have a genuine need for acceptance and positive moral image which is not just a way to disguise their "real" motivation for power and dominance by providing justifications and excuses for the existing social arrangements.

One central implication of the lack of theoretical attention to the importance of morality to advantaged groups is that it has led to a limited, incomplete conceptualization of social change. As pointed out by [Iyer and Leach \(2010\)](#), the traditional view in social psychological theorizing and research has been that because advantaged groups are primarily motivated to maintain the status quo from which they benefit, social change can be achieved mainly through the action of disadvantaged groups. But this is not necessarily the case. The case of the relations between humans and animals—that is, the growing recognition of animal rights ([Regan, 1983](#); [Ryder, 1975](#); [Singer, 1975](#)) and legislation that protects them—provides a striking illustration of a social change that emerged solely through the action of advantaged-group members. This demonstrates that the possibility that advantaged-group members would be willing to give up power solely due to moral considerations is viable. Further supporting this possibility, a growing body of research shows that beyond the collective efforts of disadvantaged groups to promote their own cause, advantaged-group members may also exhibit "solidarity-based collective action" ([Becker, 2012](#)) and collectively act for equality (e.g., [Harth, Kessler, & Leach, 2008](#); [Iyer et al., 2003](#); [Thomas, McGarty, & Mavor, 2010](#)). Importantly, because advantaged groups have more resources and influence, their support and cooperation is often critical to achieve change (e.g., [Goodman, 2001](#)).

From a broader perspective, the one-sided theoretical emphasis on groups' power-related motivations relative to morality-related motivations may be related to the general tendency of social psychological theorizing and research

to focus on the negative rather than positive aspects of intergroup relations. According to [Tropp and Mallett \(2011\)](#), whereas early theorists such as [Allport \(1945; 1954\)](#) and [Sherif \(Sherif & Sherif, 1953\)](#) investigated ways to improve relations between groups, over the past seven decades most of the research has focused on obstacles in intergroup relations (e.g., prejudice and bias). Tropp and Mallet urge social psychologists to move beyond the attempts to reduce intergroup negativity (e.g., seeking ways to diminish our reliance on stereotypes; [Mackie & Hamilton, 1993](#)) and seek also ways to promote allophilia—the experience of positive emotions toward outgroups ([Pittinsky, 2012](#)). Along with the morally-based motivations pointed out in the present article, such positive emotions might be the key to nonviolent social change as they might lead to a willingness among members of advantaged groups to change the status quo towards greater equality.

Practical Implications

The existing practical interventions to promote positive intergroup relations seem to be the “mirror image” of social psychological theories in that they tend to highlight groups’ moral-social needs but overlook their need for respect and power. For example, interventions based on the “contact hypothesis” often focus on increasing mutual liking between groups (e.g., through encouraging friendship across group boundaries; [Dixon et al., 2005](#)) and thus leave disadvantaged-group members’ need for respect and empowerment unsatisfied. This may explain why these interventions are generally less effective for improving outgroup attitudes among members of disadvantaged than among members of advantaged groups ([Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005](#)).

Thus, taking the two basic needs into account may contribute to the planning of more effective practical interventions. For example, building on [Saguy et al.’s \(2008\)](#) research, we suggest that interventions based on the contact hypothesis should encourage advantaged and disadvantaged-group members to discuss both their commonalities and the differences in terms of group disparities in privilege and opportunities, to address the needs of both groups. Talking about commonalities addresses the advantaged-group members’ need for acceptance, whereas talking about the differences (i.e., “power-talk”) addresses disadvantaged-group members’ need for empowerment. The result should be not only improved intergroup attitudes (i.e., the main outcome traditionally examined in research within the contact hypothesis framework; [Dixon et al., 2005](#)) but also greater commitment to social change in both groups. By contrast, focusing on only one of the groups’ needs is less likely to promote social change toward equality. Interventions focusing mainly on power relations and the injustices to the disadvantaged group might bring about a defensive response among advantaged-group members, hindering their support for change (see [Sonnenschein, 2008](#)) whereas interventions focusing on mutual acceptance and liking might foster an erroneous sense of intergroup harmony which diverts groups’ attention away from the need to collectively act for equality ([Saguy et al., 2009](#); see also [Saguy & Chernyak-Hai, 2012](#)).

An additional strategy that addresses both groups’ needs simultaneously and can be used in such intergroup encounters (e.g., within dialogue groups interventions) is to induce a “common stigmatizers identity” in advantaged and disadvantaged groups where they acknowledge and discuss the ways in which each group stigmatizes the other. This strategy is based on [Gaertner and Dovidio’s \(2000, 2012\)](#) Common Ingroup Identity Model, according to which inducing members of two separate groups with a common, superordinate identity can improve intergroup relations (e.g., by reducing outgroup bias). However, one limitation of the induction of a common identity is that it might draw attention away from group-based disparities and thus hinder rather than promote social change towards equality ([Dovidio, Gaertner, & Saguy, 2009](#)). We suggest that the induction of a “common stigmatizers identity” (see [Shnabel, Halabi, et al., 2013](#), for a similar approach) may address this limitation while maintaining the benefits of re-categorization of the separate groups into a common, superordinate group. Specifically, the negative stigma

from which the disadvantaged group suffers is acknowledged and discussed rather than brushed away as might potentially occur in standard common identity interventions (e.g., inducing Blacks and Whites into a common U.S. American identity; Nier et al., 2001). At the same time, the acknowledgment that both groups stigmatize each other may reduce the moral defensiveness of the advantaged-group members because it implies that both groups treat each other unfairly (albeit in different ways) and hence the advantaged-group members are not the only “bad guys”. Moreover, learning that the advantaged-group members care about (and are even offended by) the way they are viewed by the disadvantaged-group members may be empowering to disadvantaged-group members who learn that their voice matters.

Indeed, such a “common stigmatizers” strategy would reflect our perspective regarding the relational character of intergroup behavior toward societal transformation, that is, our suggestion that change occurring in one group (e.g., social acceptance of the advantaged group among members of a disadvantaged group) has the potential to set change among members of the other group in motion (e.g., a greater willingness to support social change towards equality among advantaged-group members). The idea that groups’ acknowledgment of their interdependence and willingness to generously address each other’s needs are critical for social change is consistent with the concept of Ubuntu, which in Southern African philosophy means “I am, because you are [...] how I behave impacts not only on me but also others around me because we all belong together [...] a person with Ubuntu is generous, thoughtful and respectful towards others, appreciating the differences that together make us greater than the sum of our parts” (The Tutu Foundation, n.d.). We believe and hope this philosophical approach could inspire advantaged and disadvantaged groups in various societies to cooperatively pave the way towards greater social equality.

Notes

i) Although the ethnic distinction between Mizrahi and Ashkenazi Jews is the most prominent one among Israeli Jews, the exact definition of these ethnic categories is complex and somewhat controversial. While beyond the scope of the present article, interested readers may consult Shalom Chetrit (2004).

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